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Innsbruck Awaits

The crowded tour bus honks loudly, leaving you and a cloud of thick exhaust smoke behind on the foreign street. You grumble as you realize your only form of transportation for the day has left you behind. You are mumbling to yourself about travel insurance and refunds, when a friendly local approaches and says, “Wie heisst du?”. The little German that you know allows you to respond with your name, but the local gets the message that you are not fluent in German and switches over to English. She guides you down the main pedestrian street, Maria-Theresien-Straße, in hopes of reorienting you so that you may find your tour group again. When you tell her your bus has left without you and may not be able come back for at least a few days, she doesn’t seem worried; rather she smiles and says, “You’re going to love Innsbruck”. With your local guide by your side, you finally relax and enjoy the scenery around you. Far in the distance the Nordkette mountain range, the former site of the Winter Olympics, which is used today as a popular skiing destination, paints a majestic background for the quaint town. Multi-colored buildings dating back to the 15th century line the main street and provide a variety of shops, restaurants, hotels, and movie theaters. Looming over the town, St. Anna’s Column rises up in the center of the street, seeming to stretch all the way to the Alps. You and your guide duck into one of the many restaurants adjacent to the square. She orders for you in German and explains the many points of interest in Innsbruck, as you lounge casually at an outdoor table, watching the people go by. She takes you to a hotel across the street and checks you in, giving you a number to call her by if you have any questions. She recommends you see the historic Golden Roof, a gothic balcony built by Maximilian I entirely out of golden shingles, this magnificent roof has been attracting tourists for hundreds of years. Before she leaves she drops the names of a few of her favorite places, ones she thinks you will enjoy too: Swarovski Kristallwelten the expansive Swarovski headquarters, Schloss Ambras, a 16th century castle outside Innsbruck’s inner town, and finally she recommends a trip up to the mountains to see the famous Bergisel Ski Jump and take in breathtaking views of the city below. You say goodbye and head back to your hotel. As you sink down on the bed you reflect on your luck. Having been guided by such a friendly and knowledgeable local in this beautiful Austrian city, you can’t wait to get out an explore everything, Innsbruck awaits…